

ing reminders increase the likelihood of compliance and justify screening. Attention must also be paid to the requests for self-care information, as reflected in respondents' interest in herbal and alternative therapies.

*Karen Denard Goldman, PhD CHES  
Dept. of Urban Studies and  
Community Health  
Rutgers University*

*Sharon Kloss, MPH*

*Teri Manes, MHS  
Director, Health Education Division  
Middlesex County Health Dept.*

*Marge Rojewski, BSN RN  
Adult Health Coordinator  
Middlesex County Health Dept. ■*

## Marketing Tobacco

We were pleased to see Dr. Judith Mackay's article, "The Global Tobacco Epidemic: The Next 25 Years" in *Public Health Reports* (Vol. 113, p. 14-21). As tobacco consumption declines in Western countries, it increases in developing nations as transnational tobacco companies expand their markets overseas. Tobacco remains a major health problem among immigrants from those developing nations here in the United States. A number of community surveys have documented that smoking rates among some Asian-American/Pacific Islander groups are high, especially among immigrant males. Surveys we have conducted among the Vietnamese have shown male smoking rates ranging from 35% to 56%. Surveys among other population groups have shown high rates among Korean males (33%), Laotian males (70%), Chinese-Vietnamese males (55%), and Cambodian males (71%).

Tobacco industry advertising heavily targets ethnic communities. Studies in California have shown

that tobacco billboards are found in Asian/Pacific Islander neighborhoods 17 times more often than in white neighborhoods. Tobacco companies serve as sponsors of ethnic cultural and social events, peddling their lethal products to young and old alike. Until last year, British American Tobacco (BAT), manufacturers of the cigarette brand 555, appeared at the Vietnamese Lunar New Year (Tet) Festival of Northern California distributing free tobacco promotional items, recruiting festival goers for their contests, and signing them up on mailing lists to receive free cigarette samples without checking for anyone's age. The Tet Festival last year successfully implemented a new policy of banning all tobacco advertisements and promotions.

BAT has sponsored dances at Vietnamese nightclubs to promote its tobacco brand. Its tobacco ads, which have appeared in Vietnamese newspapers and magazines, were translated into Vietnamese in order to attract non-English-speaking readers. Yet the U.S. Surgeon General's warnings were printed in English. Tobacco industry-paid articles printed in these periodicals touted the tobacco company's "efforts to promote the welfare of the Vietnamese community."

The Vietnamese Community Health Promotion Project filed a complaint in 1996 with the U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC), urging that tobacco ads and promotional items appearing in non-English-speaking publications and other venues contain the U.S. Surgeon General's warnings translated into the language of the target community. An FTC ruling in this case will affect the Vietnamese and Chinese communities that the 555 ads target and all other non-English-speaking communities targeted by tobacco industry ads.

Asian/Pacific Islander and other ethnic groups in the United States

are becoming more aware of the dangers posed by smoking and the tactics used by the tobacco industry to recruit new smokers.<sup>1,2</sup> The Vietnamese Tobacco-Free Community Task Force, a grassroots organization in the San Francisco Bay Area, disseminated an "open letter" last year urging the Vietnamese community to confront the health problem of smoking. Vietnamese in the Bay Area celebrated the first annual "Great Vietnamese Smoke Out Day" this year. Asian/Pacific Islander health advocates have raised serious questions in various statements and in letters to President Clinton about how the proposed tobacco industry settlement has not addressed the health needs of Asian/Pacific Islander and other ethnic communities here and in other countries.

As Congress and tobacco control advocates craft a final tobacco settlement, it is essential that the agreement consider the disproportionate tobacco burden borne by ethnic communities in the United States and by developing countries overseas. This must be coupled with implementation of strong, comprehensive national tobacco control campaigns in other nations and rigorous international regulation of tobacco. This must happen if we are to eradicate smoking as the number one preventable cause of premature deaths.

*Anh Le*

*Christopher N. H. Jenkins, MA MPH*

*Stephen J. McPhee, MD*

*"Suc Khoe La Vang!" ("Health Is Gold!")*

*Vietnamese Community*

*Health Promotion Project*

*University of California, San Francisco*

## References

1. Le A. The tobacco industry's chokehold loosens in U.S. *Asian Week* 1994 Apr 29; 15:40:1.
2. Nakao A. Asians fuming over tobacco ads in neighborhoods: cigarette companies target ethnic groups to expand markets, activists complain. *San Francisco Examiner* 1997 May 18; Sect. C:1. ■